

CLAIMS

1. A vehicle occupant restraint system provided in association with a vehicle seat for preventing a vehicle occupant from slipping forward under a seat belt in an impact situation such as a vehicle crash, comprising:

a pair of fixed support members attached to either side of a seat frame at a front part of a seat bottom;

an arm pivotally attached to a front end of each of said fixed support members;

a cross member extending between free ends of said arms; and

a power unit provided in association with at least one of said support members for actuating said arms and cross member upward so as to selectively raise a front part of said seat bottom in an impact situation such as a vehicle crash;

said cross member comprising an energy absorbing structure adapted to undergo a controlled deformation under a load occurring as said front part of said seat bottom is raised.

2. A vehicle occupant restraint system according to claim 1, wherein said energy absorbing structure comprises a relatively deformable member placed over said cross member.

3. A vehicle occupant restraint system according to claim 1, wherein said cross member comprises a pipe member, and said energy absorbing structure comprises perforations formed in said pipe member.

4. A vehicle occupant restraint system according to claim 1, wherein said cross member comprises a pipe member, and said energy absorbing structure comprises a relatively deformable member filled inside said pipe member.

5. A vehicle occupant restraint system according to claim 1, wherein said energy absorbing structure comprises a feature for controlling a mode of deformation of said cross member.